



**NATIONAL LEAGUE OF FAMILIES
OF AMERICAN PRISONERS AND MISSING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA**

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URGENT NOTICE REGARDING DPAA WEBSITE: Due to an ongoing review and improvement project, the League advises NOT relying on the DPAA website as it relates to the Vietnam War. Unfortunately, DPAA cannot provide a firm anticipated completion date to get its planned improvements online and available to the public. Until further notice, the League advises against relying on the DPAA website for accurate date on the Vietnam War accounting mission for a record of past successes or ongoing accounting challenges. **AMERICANS RECENTLY ACCOUNTED FOR:** Most recently, DPAA's March 28th Statistics listed three USMC personnel as recently accounted for: Captain John A. House of NY, Cpl Glyn L. Runnels, Jr., of AL, and LCpl John D. Killen, II, of IA. All were listed as KIA/BNR on June 30, 1967, in South Vietnam. Their remains were recovered in June, 2012, and identification was authorized on December 22, 2015.

The number still missing and otherwise unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War is now 1,611. Hopefully, these are the first of many to be announced as accounted for in 2017, though most had long ago been identified. Of the 1,611 still missing (POW/MIA) and unaccounted-for (KIA/BNR), 90% were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Cambodia or Laos under Vietnam's wartime control: Vietnam-1,258 (VN463, VS-795); Laos-297; Cambodia-49; PRC territorial waters-7. (Country-specific numbers fluctuate when investigations result in changes to loss locations.) Since formation in 1970, the League has sought the return of all POWs, the fullest possible accounting for the missing, and repatriation of all recoverable remains. The total accounted for since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 is now 972.

Following is a breakdown by country of the 972 Americans accounted for since the April 30, 1975 end of the Vietnam War: Vietnam – 661, Laos – 268, Cambodia – 40, and the PRC – 3. In addition, 63 US personnel were accounted for between 1973 and 1975, for a grand total of 1,035. Of the 63, 9 were from Laos, 53 from Vietnam, and 1 from Cambodia. These Americans were accounted for by unilateral US efforts in areas where access was possible, not due to cooperation with the post-war governments of Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia. Added together, a total of 276 have been recovered and identified from Laos, 715 from Vietnam, 41 from Cambodia and 3 from the PRC.

VIETNAM WAR ACCOUNTING OPERATIONS REDUCED: Due to budget constraints, field operations with Vietnam have been dramatically reduced; however, Lao operations have not been as adversely impacted, and a Lao Joint Field Activity (JFA) will begin shortly, the 4th JFA this fiscal year. The earlier JFA in Laos was postponed one week due to an aircraft breakdown and delay in Guam, but a trilateral investigation reportedly began as scheduled on January 9th. The three Recovery Teams (RTs) and one Investigation Team (IT) began late. The lost time was due to US budget and time constraints, NOT any obstruction from the Lao Government. With initial plans to conduct multiple recovery operations and investigations in Vietnam, DPAA deployed only one IT and one RT, as well as a team to handle a Field Forensic Review (FFR) and a Joint Forensic Review (JFR). Thankfully, the Vietnamese Government provided one Vietnamese Recovery Team (VRT) and one Research Investigation Team (RIT). The next JFA in Vietnam will also be significantly smaller. Though the initial plan was to field two ITs and 7 RTs, there now will be only one RT, one VRT, and one Underwater Recovery Team (URT).

ATTEND DPAA-HOSTED FAMILY UPDATES TO DEMONSTRATE YOU ARE ENGAGED AND EXPECT PRIORITY EFFORTS BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF FIRST PURSUING ANSWERS ON THOSE MISSING FROM AMERICA'S MOST RECENT WAR.

DPAA BUDGET REQUIREMENTS NOT MET: As is obvious, DPAA did NOT have the funding in Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) required to “increase the pace and scope of operations,” as has repeatedly been requested by Vietnam. Despite continuing internal dysfunction, DPAA had been proceeding well since becoming fully operational in January of 2016. After assurance from Acting DPAA Director Fern Sumpter Winbush that funding was secured, though at a lower level, but adequate to sustain operations until April 28th, the reduction in field operations was a serious blow to confidence in DPAA's commitment to pursue Vietnam War accounting as a continuing priority.

Now, due to inadequate funding, the damage is increasingly clear. The plus-up of \$20 million to reach the necessary FY17 budget total of \$132 million for planned operational requirements could not be requested until 45 days after a budget was approved. That did not occur, and it now appears there may be no budget approval this fiscal year, meaning it is already too late to receive, contract and utilize additional funds for the 3rd and 4th quarters of FY17. Of DPAA's initial funding for FY2017, funds were already obligated for WWII and Korean War accounting, including recovery of remains from US cemeteries for individual identification; thus the ID count for WWII and Korean War continues to rise significantly.

YOUR HELP IS URGENTLY NEEDED! Write your elected officials to object to the lack of funding for DPAA to meet FY17 operational requirements and ask for additional FY2018 funding to handle worldwide accounting and recovery efforts, as well as exemption of DPAA funding from any/all reductions. Funding for Veterans' care is rightfully protected by exempting VA budgets from across-the-board reductions and/or sequestration. Our UNRETURNED Veterans, America's POW/MIAs, deserve that same protection and adequate funds to return them to our Nation by achieving the fullest possible accounting.

DPAA DIRECTOR SELECTION PROCESS: As of this date, a new DPAA Director STILL has not been selected, now 11 months after the surprise resignation of Mike Linnington. Advertisements seeking applicants for this crucial position were sought and the closing date was April 6th. The responsible official now “Acting in the Capacity of” Undersecretary of Defense for Policy (USD-P) is Ms. Theresa Whelan, a career DoD official. A new person to permanently fill the USD-P position is unlikely to be nominated, confirmed and in place by the time the selection must be made. Hopefully, Secretary of Defense Mattis will ensure serious consideration of recommendations provided by the League, Special Operations Association (SOA), Special Forces Association (SFA) and others. Up to now, there has been no indication that important qualifications – such as experience, character, commitment and dedication to the mission – were given consideration, nor crucial factors such as having earned the trust and respect of affected families, Veterans and foreign officials whose willingness to authorize necessary cooperation is critical to success.

DPAA-HOSTED FAMILY UPDATES: The remainder of the 2017 calendar for DPAA-hosted Family Updates is May 20th, Syracuse, NY; during the League's 48th Annual Meeting June 21st-25th; and September 9th, Detroit, MI. You may have noticed postings on the DPAA website indicating 1,276 family members had attended these updates in 2016. What is unstated, therefore unclear, is that despite only roughly 20% of that number being Vietnam War-related family members, the representational percentage for Vietnam War family members is much higher than for other wars, even though we have fewer missing!

LEAGUE CHAIRMAN'S NOTE: During January 8th-11th trilateral Vietnamese/Cambodian/Lao (SRV/KOC/LPDR) defense-related talks in Da Nang, Vietnamese Defense Minister General Ngo Xuan Lich thanked the Cambodian Government for supporting Vietnam's “search for and repatriation of the remains of Vietnamese volunteer soldiers and experts who sacrificed their lives in Cambodia” and agreed with Cambodian Defense Minister Tea Banh to continue this cooperation. Standing by those who serve, and achieving the fullest possible accounting for them, is now truly accepted worldwide, and symbolic of how far the accounting mission has come.